

SCHOLARS' NOTES.

(From the International Lessons for 1881, by Edwin W. Rice, as issued by American Sunday-School Union.)

LESSON IV.

APRIL 24.]

[About 27 A.D.]

COVETOUSNESS.

Luke 12: 13-21.

COMMIT TO MEMORY VS. 13-15.

13. And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.

14. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?

15. And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

16. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

17. And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

18. And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater: and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

19. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

20. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

21. So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Take heed, and beware of covetousness.—LUKE 12: 15.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

If we love the world, we do not love God.

INTRODUCTORY.—The previous part of the chapter, vs. 1-12, contains a warning against hypocrisy, and the succeeding section, vs. 22-34, against worldly solicitude. The lesson treats of the folly of depending upon worldly possessions for lasting comfort and happiness. The double conjecture has been made that the questioner was unjustly treated by his older brother and that he asked for more than his legal share. But the narrative simply tells us that he had mistaken the mission of Christ.

EXPLANATIONS.

LESSON TOPICS.—(I.) UNSATISFYING RICHES (II.) DECEITFUL RICHES. (III.) TRUE RICHES.

UNSATISFYING RICHES.—(13-16.) COMPANY, the multitude listening to Christ, v. 1; WHO MADE ME, Christ did not come into the world to settle disputes about lands; JUDGE, the Rabbis settled disputes. The questioner regarded Jesus as a mere rabbi; UNTO THEM, he addressed the parable to the crowd; COVETOUSNESS, forbidden in the Tenth Commandment.

II. DECEITFUL RICHES.—(16-20.) THOUGHT, reasoned; WHAT SHALL I DO, to preserve my wealth. He ought to have asked, "How shall I use it in the service of God?" Jesus answers the question, v. 33, "Sell that ye have and give alms." His mind was filled solely with thoughts about the accumulation of wealth and its safe-keeping; BUILD GREATER, he enlarged his barns, but his heart became more narrow; MUCH GOODS.....MANY YEARS, he congratulated himself upon his large possessions and deceived himself with the notion that they would last him for a long period.

III. TRUE RICHES.—(21.) FOR HIMSELF, he was selfish, and abused God's gifts. All the riches of the world cannot profit us to save our souls; RICH TOWARD GOD, such riches are neither uncertain nor deceitful. They are faith and love. The meaning of the parable is well expressed, Prov. 13: 7, "There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing; there is that maketh himself poor yet hath great riches."

PRACTICAL QUESTIONS SUGGESTED BY THE LESSON.—(1.) Why cannot riches add years to our life? (2.) Why can we not take riches beyond the grave? Ps. 49: 17. (3.) Where is the mine of unsearchable riches? Eph. 3: 8. (4.) What does he who is rich toward God gain by death? Phil. 1: 21.

LESSON V.

MAY 1.]

[About 23 A. D.]

LOST AND FOUND.

Luke 15: 1-10.

COMMIT TO MEMORY VS. 4-7.

1. Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.

2. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

3. And he spake this parable unto them saying,

4. What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

5. And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

6. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me: for I have found my sheep which was lost.

7. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

8. Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?

9. And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.

10. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.—LUKE 15: 10.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

God seeks and saves the lost.

INTRODUCTORY.—The three parables of this chapter, the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Son, have all this in common, that something which was lost has been found. The two first parables depict more especially the active effort put forth in finding that which was lost. The parable of the Prodigal Son describes the course and feelings of a wayward son, and the courteous and warm love of the father who welcomes him back. The general object of the three parables is to portray the love of God for the penitent sinner. An excellent way of bringing out the thought of the parables in this lesson is by representing the Sinner as Lost, Sought, Found and Rejoiced Over.

NOTES.—PARABLE, in the New Testament a story or narrative used by our Lord to illustrate religious truths. There are thirty-one in the Gospels.—SHEPHERD, a very ancient occupation. Abel was a "keeper or feeder of sheep." Gen. 4: 2, and the wealth of the patriarchs seems to have consisted largely in their flocks and herds. The shepherd leads the flock out from the fold over the narrow ways, seeks out good pastures, cherishes the feeble lambs, and guards them against the attacks of wild beasts, as David did of old, 1 S. m. 17: 34-36. These abound in Palestine, and not infrequently do the shepherds lose their life in the struggle. Our Lord calls himself the "Good Shepherd," John 10: 14. For an excellent description see Thomson's Land and Book, Vol. 1, pp. 301-305.

EXPLANATIONS.

LESSON TOPICS.—(I.) THE SINNER'S FRIEND. (II.) THE LOST SHEEP. (III.) THE LOST COIN.

I. THE SINNER'S FRIEND.—(1, 2.) ALL, many; SINNERS, the Pharisees called those especially sinners who had been guilty of the more flagrant violations of the moral law, Luke 7: 39; TO HEAR HIM, they were attracted to Jesus, because while he condemned their sins, he treated them kindly as men whom he had come to save; PHARISEES AND SCRIBES, spurned rather than made effort to help the fallen; RECEIVETH, spoken in reproach. This was one of the chief charges brought against the Saviour.

II. THE LOST SHEEP.—(3-7.) WHAT MAN OF YOU, an appeal to that universal feeling which impels us to seek what is valuable and lost; ONE OF THEM, a single one is valuable and worth effort; GO AFTER, Christ came to the earth to save lost souls; TILL HE FIND IT, persistent seeking; LAYETH IT ON HIS SHOULDER, does not punish it, but carries it. So Christ hath borne our griefs, Isa. 53: 4, 5, and came not into the world to condemn, but to save it, John 3: 17; LOST, sinners are in a lost and undone condition when grace finds them, Matt. 18: 11; JUST, righteous. Our Lord here refers to all such as are righteous in their own estimation and think they do not need to repent. The Pharisees might take this to themselves.

III. THE LOST COIN.—(8-10.) TEN PIECES OF SILVER, drachme; ONE PIECE, equal to about 15 or 16 cents; although hidden in the dust it bore the stamp of the emperor, perhaps. So the sinner, although lost, still bears the image of God; DILIGENTLY, an earnest, painstaking search, Matt. 2: 7; ANGELS OF GOD, it would seem from this that the angels know what takes place on earth.

LEARN THESE LESSONS:

Christ came to call sinners to repentance. Every soul is of great value in the sight of God. There is much joy in heaven over the penitent sinner.

Christ is the Good Shepherd and giveth his life for us.

ILLUSTRATION.—Hope for the lost. "Lady Huntington was trying to lead the despondent brother of Whitefield to Christ. To her urgent entreaties he answered, 'Oh, it is of no use! I am lost! I am lost!' 'Thank God for that!' said she. 'Why!' exclaimed the man in astonishment. 'Because,' said Lady Huntington, 'Christ came to save the lost; and, if you are lost, he is just the one that can save you.'"

A SIGNIFICANT STORY.

A wealthy banker in one of our large cities, who is noted for his large subscriptions to charities, and for his kindly habits of private benevolence, was called on by his pastor one evening lately and asked to go with him to the help of a man who had attempted suicide.

They found the man in a wretched house, in an alley, not far from the banker's dwelling. The front room was a cobbler's shop; behind it, on a miserable bed in the kitchen, lay the poor shoemaker with a gaping gash in his throat, while his wife and children were gathered around him.

"These people are starving," exclaimed the banker as soon as he caught sight of their pinched, wan faces; and while the doctor was busy sewing up the cobbler's wound, he hurried away to procure fuel and food.

"We have been without food for days," said the woman when he returned. "It's not my husband's fault. He is a hard-work-

ing, sober man. But he could neither get work, nor pay for that which he had done. To-day he went for the last time to collect a debt due him by a rich family, but the gentleman was not at home. My husband was weak from fasting, and seeing us starving drove him mad. So it ended that way," turning to the fainting, motionless figure on the bed.

The banker, having fed and warmed the family, hurried home, opened his desk, and took out a file of little bills. All his large debts were promptly met quarterly, but he was apt to be careless about the accounts for milk, bread, &c., because they were so petty.

He found there a bill of Michael Goodlow's for repairing children's shoes, ten dollars. Michael Goodlow was the suicide. It was the banker's unpaid debt which had brought these people to the verge of the grave, and driven this man to desperation, while at the very time the banker had been giving away thousands in charity.

The cobbler recovered and will never want a friend while the banker lives, nor will a small unpaid bill be found on the banker's table.—*Youth's Companion*.

STAY IN THE COUNTRY.

The *Western Rural*, published at Chicago, Ill., in giving advice to young men not to come to the city, says:

"Occasionally, and only occasionally, does the young man from the country find a desirable opening in the city, and begin a successful career. The city is full of overflowing. There is no business that is not greatly overdone, and there is no business which cannot at any time be supplied with more help than it needs. There is no position now filled which cannot be filled with as much competency as it now is, and at a much less salary than the present occupant is receiving, almost at a moment's notice. Employers are usually willing to pay what services are worth, and desire to retain tried and faithful help. Otherwise there is not a man or woman employed in Chicago to-day who would not have their salary reduced, or their place filled by some one else. Times are now prosperous. Business is at its noontide of success. Never was more money made in the marts of trade than is being made here now; and yet, while this is true, we have hundreds of young men who are either working for starvation wages or are wholly idle."

THE TURNING POINT.

Some fifty years ago, in a revival at Yale College, a young man of promising talents became deeply serious. His father, who was a man of infidel principles, hearing of it, sent for his son to come home. He did not care to have his son become a Christian. The summons was obeyed; he went home. And the result was that he soon lost his serious impressions, and remained unconverted. In due time he graduated, studied law, and commenced practice in that profession. But his life was a failure. He became a sceptic, acquired a taste for intoxicating liquors, became a drunkard, and his father and friends had to support him and his family.

It might have been different. Had he remained in college under the influence of that revival, with many of his fellow-students, he might have become a Christian, consecrated his talent to Christ, and have been useful in his service.—*American Messenger*.

JACK.

Jack is a boy who loves to please. It is hard for him to say "No," but he does say it when he cannot do right if he says "Yes." One day Ned Jones came to him and said, "Come, Jack, let's learn to smoke."

"No," said Jack, "not I! I hate to see a man smoke, and it's worse for a boy."

"Why?" said Ned.

"'Cause a boy ought to have a clean mouth and a sweat breath," said Jack.

That's true, Jack, and so ought a man, but he will not if he learns to smoke while he is a boy. Yes, it is worse to see a boy smoke than a man, for it shows what the man will come to be!—*Band of Hope Review*.

FOURFOLD RESTORATION.

One day a Kaffir girl in South Africa went to a missionary and dropped four sixpences into his hand, saying, "That is your money." "You don't owe me anything," replied the teacher.

"I do," she answered, "and I will tell you how. At the public examination you promised a sixpence to any one in the class I was in who would write the best specimen on a slate. I gave in my slate and got the sixpence; but you did not know then that another person wrote that specimen for me. Yesterday you were reading in the church about Zaccheus, who said, 'If I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.' I took from you one sixpence, and I bring you back four."—*Word and Work*.

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